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HYMENORUS OBSCURUS AS A PEST OF CITRUS (COL. CISTELIDAE)

J. R. WATSON

Occasionally one sees on the bark of citrus and other trees a dense colony composed of hundreds of little black beetles. The beetles are oval in shape, less than a quarter of an inch long and covered with grayish-brown hairs. In the late afternoon the beetles leave their resting place and go in search of food which consists mostly of lichens and other growths on the bark of the trees. But it seems that they may occasionally become pests. In July Mr. S. B. Jones of Orchid, Fla., sent in to the Experiment Station a number of these beetles with the statement that they had been feeding extensively on "June bloom" and other tender growth of his trees. In confinement they feed greedily on tender citrus foliage.

The writer has also recently caught these beetles eating out freshly inserted buds in a nursery. It would seem that this beetle must be included among the minor pests of a citrus tree.

This beetle should not be confused with the downy darkling beetle *(Epitragus tomentosus)*, which it considerably resembles in shape and color. The latter is larger, never collects in colonies, and is one of the most beneficial insects in a citrus grove. Its food habits are very similar to those of lady beetles and in many groves it is much more abundant than even the twice-stabbed lady-beetle.

A NEW CITRUS INSECT

A caterpillar recently found feeding on the leaves of a young grapefruit tree at Orlando, Florida, proved on rearing to maturity to be *Prodenia latifascia* Walker.

Altho this insect probably is of no economic importance as a pest, its presence seems to be a new record for citrus insects. Hence this note may be of interest.

The identification was made by Mr. Wm. Schaus of the National Museum, who says that *P. latifascia* Walker is essentially a tropical insect found from Mexico to Argentina, including Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, St. Lucia. The only previous records of its breeding in the United States is one each from onions and alfalfa in Texas. Nothing is known of its host plants in other countries.

The insect belongs to the cut worm family and resembles somewhat, both in larval and adult form, some of our common pests, as the sweet potato caterpillar, *P. commelinae,* and the cotton boll cut worm, *P. ornithogalli.* When full grown the larva was about 2 inches long and of a brownish gray velvety color with a wide dark band down the dorsal surface and 3 narrow golden brown stripes along each side; ventral surface greenish brown.

It pupated July 31st in soil and the moth emerged August 17, 1922.

ARTHUR C. MASON.

THE PSOCID OF THE OAKS

FRANK STIRLING

Thruout the south-eastern United States, especially in Florida, the water oaks frequently take on a bright silvery-grey coloring which shows particularly on the larger limbs and trunks. Close observation shows this to be caused by a silky web which completely covers the surface. This web is of a bright, clear color and glistens in the sun and on bright moonlight nights, making an effect well worth noticing.

By removing a part of the web with a pen knife or sharp stick one may, by carefully observing, note countless numbers of a tiny insect. This little insect is known as a psocid (Psocus sp.) and is related to the book-lice. These psocids are useful rather than injurious, as they feed on fungus growths and lichens which grow on the trunks and larger limbs of the oaks. They apparently spin this fine, gauzy web for their protection against birds and other enemies which would otherwise destroy them.

This insect is reported as occurring in especial abundance on water oaks in the vicinity of Lakeland, Orlando, Sorrento, Dade City and Gainesville, Fla., along the Gulf Coast in the vicinity of New Orleans, La., and near Mobile, Ala. To those not informed the appearance of this grey, silvery covering is often viewed with alarm.

The webs, together with the insects, will disappear after a short time and the only effect upon the tree will be a cleaner and healthier appearance of the bark.